

IOWA COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION GRANT BIMONTHLY BRIEFING

Update on Cerro Gordo's Healthy Eating Project

One of lowa's four strategic directions for the Community Transformation Grant focuses on active living and healthy eating, and several local projects have been implemented for this goal. Cerro Gordo County is one of the counties working to make positive impacts in this direction, and their project with local restaurants has been quite innovative!

As first reported in June/July 2012, the Cerro Gordo CTG program initiated the development of a smart phone app that assists residents in locating local restaurants based upon their nutrition environment, location, or cuisine type. To prepare for the app's development, the Cerro Gordo CTG program conducted the Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey for Restaurants (NEMS-R) in dining establishments located within the county. These assessments provide ratings on how healthy the restaurant's menu is, and the app arms consumers with the information to make healthier, informed eating choices.

As a result of the app and the NEMS-R assessments, a few restaurants have voluntarily made their entrées healthier by switching ingredients or providing a new healthy entrée. The Cerro Gordo CTG program has had a great, overall response from dining establishments, too. Nearly every restaurant in the county chose to participate in the app.

The Cerro Gordo CTG program believes that this app has further potential for content and sustainability. In the future, the app could contain other health information such as physical activity venues, immunization appointments, or home care resources. It could also incorporate ads or coupons for healthy choices – with the placement paid for by participating restaurants - which could provide revenue to sustain the app and any future updates.

Apps for the I-Phone and Android are available for download on I-Tunes and the Google Play store.

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Recent News

- On June 20, CTG Evaluator, Cathy Lillehoj, presented on community-based health strategies at the 7th Biennial Childhood Obesity Conference in Long Beach, California. Her presentation featured her work and data findings from CTG, body mass index surveillance, and the Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey for Vending (NEMS-V).
- Our work with the lowa Primary Care Association on community referral projects was highlighted and was included in a Trust for America's Health <u>report</u> and news release.
- Regional CTG meetings were held with grantees across the state in April-June 2013.
- The CTG dental project was recently highlighted by the American Public Health Association (APHA). The project integrates blood pressure and tobacco screenings into dental practices. View the APHAs article at: http://www.publichealthnewswire.org/?p=7998.
- The Iowa CTG Bimonthly Briefing has a new look!

Resources

Representatives from more than 25 groups across lowa make up the Regional Food Systems Working Group of lowa. This group meets quarterly to discuss and coordinate efforts to build more vibrant regional food systems. For more information, visit: https://sites.google.com/site/iowarfswg/project-definition.

leading causes of death and disability through evidence-based initiatives, environmental and systems change, and strengthening the health infrastructure. A minimum of 50 percent of the grant funds, distributed to local boards of health, must be used for four strategic directions: Tobacco-free living, active living and healthy eating, healthy and safe physical environments, and increased use of high impact clinical prevention services.





















































































Rural County Success Story

The Van Buren CTG program explored ways to increase the variety of fresh produce available in their county since many of their communities lack healthy food options and are considered "food deserts" by the USDA. A food desert is a district with little or no access to large grocery stores that offer fresh and affordable foods needed to maintain a healthy diet. To combat this, staff decided to try offering one additional farmer's market in the county, and a local retail store offered to sponsor the market. The CTG staff sent letters to local farmers inviting them to join the market and helped with promoting the market in the two local newspapers. The "Villages Farmers Market" started the first Saturday in May and will continue each Saturday morning through October. The staff is very hopeful that the market will grow throughout the summer and will offer more and more fresh local produce. The staff plans to continue to work with the local retail store to increase the number of farmers participating in the market and will continue to promote the market. Signage has been ordered with the "Buy Fresh Buy Local" logo as well as information about the local market to help increase awareness of the market.

By creating this additional Farmers Market, the CTG program hopes to increase the local fresh foods available to county residents. The local CTG staff plans to look at other creative ways to increase local foods available to Van Buren County residents.

Metropolitan County Success Story

The Woodbury CTG program has partnered with the City of Sioux City Parks and Recreation Department and a few local vendors to increase the availability of healthier food and beverage options at the city's swimming pools and Long Lines Family Recreation Center. Residents who access these recreational facilities now have healthier options available at vending machines and concession stands.

Snack and cold beverage vending machines at Sioux City's five swimming pools and the recreation center now contain a variety of healthier items. In fact, 17-20 percent of items in the snack machines and 22-100 percent of items in cold beverage machines are considered a healthier option per NEMS-V requirements. When analyzing all options in all vending machines at all locations, 45.8 percent of items are healthier options.

In addition to the vending machines, concession stands also have healthier options available. Two of the five Sioux City swimming pools have concession stands and both have implemented changes. They have replaced regular chips with baked chips and have added a granola bar and a cheese stick to the menu. They have also added a warm soft pretzel to the menu at the largest aquatic center. New menus, pricing strategies, creative naming, and larger font sizes are being used to grab the consumer's attention to the healthier options.

"Mix It Up" signage is also being used to draw attention to the healthier options. Large banners have been placed on the fences at the pools, posters hang in the rec center, messaging was added to the menus and yellow product pushers draw attention to healthier items in the snack machines.



Spotlight on Active Living and Healthy Eating: Community Food System Assessment and Planning

A food system assessment is a cooperative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of food issues and assets (indicators), so as to inform policy, system and environmental changes at a local, county, regional or state level. Often led by a team of food system stakeholders, community food system assessments may be conducted per specified region, such as census tract, city, county or group of counties.

A food system assessment is a natural accompaniment to the Community Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement Planning (CHNA&HIP) process conducted by local public health agencies. Using similar approaches, a food system assessment may increase community involvement, and integration across collaboration, programs and leverage new resources. The information gathered may lead to more strategic and effective public health action. A food system assessment can lead to important changes in the community's food system, such as increased access to healthful food for low-income lowans, local economic development, and improved public health.

Public health will benefit from food system assessments through:

- Broader awareness and visibility of food system-related issues
- Improved public health program development and coordination
- Stronger or new networks and coalitions
- Increased community participation in shaping the food system
- Positive changes in environmental and systems-level changes affecting the food system
- Greater community capacity to create positive change

The goal of this initiative is to have all counties in lowa complete a community food system assessment and plan by September 2016 by integrating it with the current CHNA&HIP process. The CTG team is developing the materials and training tools to guide public health practitioners and community stakeholders in assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating food system initiatives. CTG counties will "pilot" the materials and process in the next year. The assessment and planning materials and training will be provided to CTG contractors in August.

